



March 13, 2018

Rush D. Holt

Chief Executive Officer and
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Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell
Senate Minority Leader Charles Schumer
U.S. Senate

Speaker of the House Paul Ryan
House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi
U.S. House of Representatives

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Schumer, Speaker Ryan, and Minority Leader Pelosi:

On March 14, thousands of students, parents and teachers are expected to participate in a National School Walkout, expressing their concerns about gun violence in schools and urging Congress to pass legislation. While our nation considers how to address gun violence, it is important to remember that scientific research can help us understand risk factors and the impacts of gun policy interventions at federal, state and local levels. Unfortunately, research on gun violence in the United States has been severely limited by the Dickey amendment, which bars the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) from funding research efforts that "advocate or promote gun control."

A recently released large-scale study of gun violence research by RAND Corporation confirms the negative consequences of existing research barriers. The report finds that gun violence research is "generally far behind where it is for most other causes of death that claim similar numbers of lives in the U.S. each year" and that "the limited evidence base reflects shortcomings in the contributions that scientific study has made to the policy debate."

The lack of scientific research should not be read as a reason to postpone civil discourse and legislative action; however, research can help to provide additional insights into the outcomes of policies. The American Association for the Advancement of Science -- the world's largest general scientific society -- urges Congress and the White House to lift existing restrictions on federally funded research of gun violence. If permitted to do so, researchers would collect and analyze unbiased data on gun violence, information that is critically needed to help save thousands of lives prematurely taken from our country each year. Our children's and our nation's future depends on it.

Sincerely,

Rush D. Holt

Copy: President Donald J. Trump